

REMARKS

Telephone Interview Summary

On June 10, 2008 Applicant's representative participated in a telephone interview with Examiner Rudy to discuss the present application. Applicant's representative appreciated the opportunity to discuss the present application with the Examiner.

Applicant's representative explained that the claimed invention uses a manufacturer's production schedule that is communicated with suppliers to determine when supplies are ordered. Supply orders comprise a production delivery time that indicates what time of day supplies are needed at the manufacturer's production line to a complete production process. In addition, production at supplier facilities does not begin until a supply order is received. Production then starts in order to meet the production delivery time indicated by the manufacturer in the supply order. When transmitting supply orders, the manufacturer accounts for the lead time needed to transmit the supply order, start production, produce supplies, transport supplies, and move them to a production line location.

The Examiner indicated that further amendments to the claims are required to identify the technology relevant to the invention. Applicant's representative explained that the invention is computer based, that the claims can be amended to recite computer technology, and that the specification supports such claim amendments. The

Examiner suggested adding further claim amendments to distinguish the invention over various just-in-time manufacturing prior art references. The Examiner indicated that even if the proposed amendments overcome the prior art that has been cited to date, further search and consideration is required before any claims can be allowed. No agreement regarding the claims was reached during the telephone interview.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

The Examiner has maintained the rejection of claims 1-9 and 11-23 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Brown (US Pat. 5,293,552) in view of Hogge (US Pat. 5,983,194). It is the Examiner's position that Brown discloses every aspect of the claimed invention except for determining a time to receive supplies from a supplier. The Examiner relies on Hogge to teach coordinating production in a plurality of factories including determining the time needed to receive supplies from a supplier. The Examiner believes it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to add Hogge's teachings to Brown.

Claims 10 and 11 have been canceled and the remaining claims have been amended. In view of Applicant's amended claims, Applicant respectfully traverses the rejections. Independent claims 1, 9, and 17 have been amended to indicate clearly that in the present invention production delivery times communicated to suppliers in supply orders are determined by the manufacturer's production schedule, that supplies are produced according to production delivery times and lead times that take in account an

amount of time needed to receive supplies at a production line location, and that supplies are received by the manufacturer according to production delivery times. Applicant has further amended the claims to indicate production line locations are also communicated in supply orders and that supplies are labeled with production delivery times and production line locations to facilitate the movement of supplies at the manufacturer's production facility. Finally, Applicant has amended the claims to indicate that supply orders for supplies to be used in a current production process are transmitted while production is in process. Production delivery times and production line locations according to the present invention reduce inventory at the manufacturer's and supplier's facilities as well as facilitate the movement of supplies, and therefore, reduce manufacturing costs. Applicant respectfully submits that production delivery times and production line locations as well as the other claimed features are not taught or suggested by Brown or Hogge, and therefore, the references cannot be used to reject the claims of the application.

Brown teaches a system and method for synchronizing producer and supplier schedules using "restrictive links" that are established between the schedules. Brown teaches modifying the schedules of all parties involved so that a fabricator's schedule is synchronized with the schedules of suppliers. Hogge teaches supply demands that include a "due date" (Col. 3, ll. 28-35) which is used in conjunction with "lead times" to determine an output plan (Col. 3, ll. 45-55). The output plan is modified as feedback from supplier factories is received. (Col. 4, ll. 32-36). Both references teach modifying a

manufacturer's schedule as well as supplier schedules in an effort to coordinate the schedules of all parties. Applicant's invention differs in that the manufacturer's production schedule is used to control the process of ordering and delivering supplies. The manufacturer does not change its schedule and instead communicates its schedule to suppliers so they can meet the manufacturer's production requirements. The production delivery times and production line locations that are communicated to suppliers in supply orders are used to label supplies. The manufacturer then uses the production delivery times and production line locations on supply labels to facilitate the delivery and movement of supplies at the manufacturer's facility. The production delivery times and production line locations that are on the supply labels are used to stage supplies and move them to particular locations on the production line so that supplies are consumed as quickly as possible after they are received by the manufacturer. This approach reduces inventory levels at the suppliers as well as the manufacturer, and therefore, reduces costs.

Applicant respectfully submits the Brown and Hogge references do not teach features of the present invention including production delivery times, production line locations, labeling supplies with production delivery times and production line locations, and transmitting supply orders while production is in progress.

Support for the claim amendments are found in the following passages:

Claim Language	Specification Location	Passage
computerized system and method; transmission of supply orders during production process	Page 7, lines 3-20	Based on supply requirements at the production line for the production sequence, orders for supplies are transmitted to suppliers during the production process 103. In one embodiment of the present invention as shown in Fig. 1, requests for supplies may be transmitted from manufacturer computers 104, 105 throughout the production process 103 to supplier computers 106, 108, 110. The manufacturer computers 104, 105 are adapted to transmit supply orders or requests to supplier computers as production requirements dictate. For example, at a point during production 102, manufacturer computer (1) 104 may transmit an order to supplier A computer 106 when the production starts at this location. At another point during production 107 manufacturer computer (2) 105 may also transmit one or more supply orders to the supplier computers 106, 108, 110. Various conditions may trigger the transmission of a supply order from a manufacturer computer to a supplier computer. In addition, transmission of supply orders may occur automatically when certain criteria are met. Alternatively, individuals in the manufacturing facility can submit orders when certain criteria are met. Regardless of how supply orders are initiated from the manufacturer computers, the supplier computers 106, 108, 110 are adapted to receive the supply orders within seconds or minutes of transmission from the manufacturer computers so that the supplier can start making arrangements to produce and deliver the requested supplies to meet the manufacturer's production requirements for the production sequence.
production delivery time; production line location	Page 8, line 21 – page 9, line 4	The supply order data submitted by the manufacturer computer to the supplier computers comprises a production sequence. For example, in an automobile manufacturing plant, a production sequence may comprise information and details about the model, type, options, and color for the automobiles to be produced at a particular assembly line. The supply order data further comprises a production delivery time and a production line location. The production delivery time indicates when the supplies are needed for the production sequence. The production line location indicates where the supplies are needed for the production sequence.

Conclusion

Applicant has amended the claims to more clearly define the features of the invention related to production delivery times, production line locations, and transmission of supply orders during production to meet a manufacturer's production schedule requirements. Applicant respectfully submits the present application is in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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